

*State Representative*

# HELEN SOMMERS

reports to the 36th District



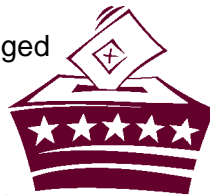
April 2004

## WASHINGTON'S UNIQUE PRIMARY ELECTION

For 70 years we have enjoyed a range of party choices in our unique “blanket” primary election. The voter could pick a Democrat in one race, a Republican in another, a Libertarian in the third, and on to a Green in yet another.

Almost all other states 1) allow only registered party members to vote in the primary, or 2) make the voter choose the ballot of one of the parties. Louisiana allows choice among all party candidates, but only the top two go on to the general election. So, it is possible to see two Democrats or two Republicans as the only choices—and probably none of the minor party candidates.

Last year the major parties challenged our unique primary in court. The federal court banned our open system, finding that the parties have the right to select their own nominees.



The Legislature approved the “top two” Louisiana model. In case of another court challenge, the bill provided an alternative—“open primary/private choice”, where voters choose among candidates of one political party but the choice of party is private.

The Governor vetoed the first alternative. The Governor reasoned that the “top two” alternative was likely to be challenged, and that minor party and independent candidates have the right to bring their diverse views to the November ballot.

In summary, in the September primary you will choose a Democratic, Republican, Libertarian or other party ballot, but you will not be required to declare any party affiliation.

**Phone:** 360-786-7814

**Committees:** Appropriations, *Chair*  
State Investment Board  
Wash. State Institute for Public  
Policy, Board

## THE VIADUCT - HIGHEST PRIORITY

In transportation polling, the Viaduct rates highest even among residents east of Lake Washington. The Dept. of Transportation has completed initial analysis of five alternatives. They are: a six-lane tunnel, a four-lane tunnel, rebuild the present structure, a new aerial structure, and a six-lane surface boulevard along the waterfront. Costs range from \$3 to \$4 billion.

I believe two or three of the alternatives are not feasible. The all-surface boulevard would be a rush hour nightmare for commuters, business and industry traffic. The four-lane tunnel would eliminate the north portal (access from Elliott Ave. and exit to Western Ave.) and therefore be closed to all traffic to or from the Regrade, Magnolia, Queen Anne, Interbay, Ballard and further north, including industry along the Canal. The six-lane tunnel shows the north portal as an option, NOT included in the basic design, and is the most costly.

I believe the more likely alternatives will be the rebuild or the new aerial.

Public hearings are scheduled for: April 27, Dome Room, Arctic Bldg., 700 Third Ave., 4 to 7 pm; and April 29, Leif Erickson Hall, 2245 N W 57<sup>th</sup> St., 5 to 8 pm. Comments may also be sent by e-mail via the website [www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/Viaduct](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/Viaduct). Make your voice heard.

## **EDUCATION**

### **K-12 AND CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Legislative approval of charter schools was one of the most emotional and controversial issues of the session. These charter schools will be established and funded through contracts with local school districts or the Superintendent of Public Instruction. They have more flexibility and may have longer hours and extended school calendars. Enrollment is open with a focus on helping children most in need of special attention.

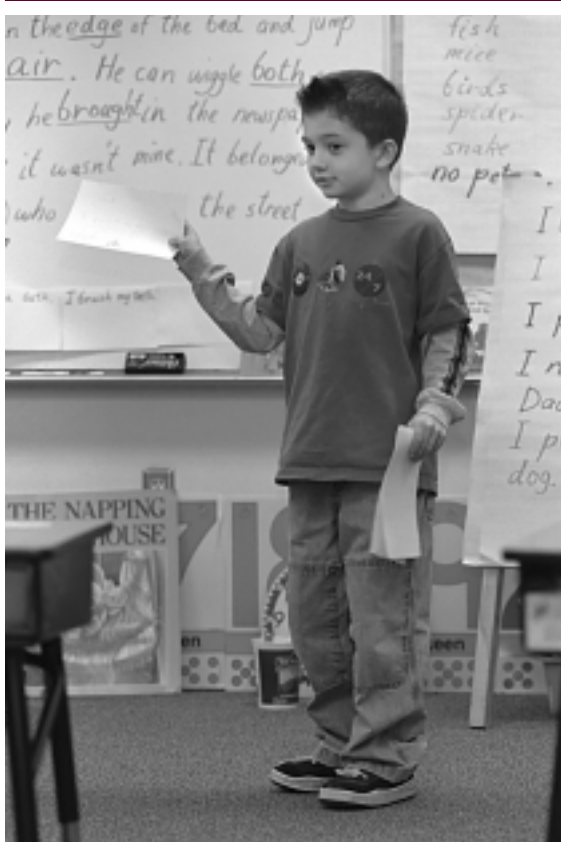
Governor Locke pushed approval of charter schools as part of his education agenda, and I supported this proposal as a pilot project, allowing just 45 charter schools over the next six years. Innovators will have an opportunity to prove that more flexible teaching gets better results. The five-year charters will outline goals and responsibilities – and they will be judged on the progress of their students.

### **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Beginning in 2008, high school seniors will be tested to make sure they meet the new higher standards required to graduate. We recognized that students may need more than one chance to pass that test, and passed legislation allowing them to retake it if necessary.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

The UW's Bothell branch campus, now serving only upper division students, is considering a plan for a four-year campus. Bothell would remain part of the University and would provide much needed additional access.



The UW turns away thousands of applicants every year, and our other four-year schools are located in Bellingham, Ellensburg, Cheney and Olympia. Central Puget Sound has no similar higher education opportunity, despite being the most heavily populated area in the state.

### **K-12 AND REMEDIAL MATH**

Our high schools are not fully preparing students to enter our colleges and universities. A jolting report by the community college system showed that a large percentage of high school graduates (going directly to college within the year) need remedial courses.

57% take a remedial course or courses – mostly in math in order to qualify for freshman college math.

Why? Apparently, in part, because counselors don't make college requirements clear and because of a student culture of "I can make it up in community college."

This is costly. We fund high school and then high school courses in community colleges. And it costs the student in tuition and in time.

The Legislature directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the community college system to identify the

reasons behind the deficiencies and to significantly reduce the need for remediation—assuring that students take high school math in high school.

# 2004 REPORT TO THE 36TH DISTRICT

## BUDGET AND FISCAL CHALLENGES

As Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, my primary responsibility was to develop the House's proposed supplemental budget — changes and updates to the two-year budget approved in 2003 — and to lead negotiations with the Senate on a final document. Our state's economy is recovering very slowly and state revenues are weak. Our top priorities were education, health and children.

**Higher Education** - The approved budget funds some 3000 places for students in our universities and colleges. Governor Locke called it .. "an important step toward providing highly skilled workers for our recovery economy." This economy is becoming more knowledge-based. The high tech and biotech sectors stress the need for providing the well-educated, highly-skilled em-

ployees they need to grow and prosper in Washington.

However, providing higher education opportunities for the growing numbers of high school graduates is still falling behind, and meeting that challenge will remain a priority for me. This graph illustrates the gap between funding and estimated student demand.

**Health Care** - Last year's budget cuts impacted many areas of health care. This session we restored funds to hospitals, especially those that provide most of the charity or unpaid care. Harborview is the major example of a hospital that takes all cases and turns away none.

**Home Care Workers** - Those caring for the elderly or disabled in their own homes received a pay increase and other benefits.

Nursing homes, boarding homes and adult family homes all received a small increase in rates.

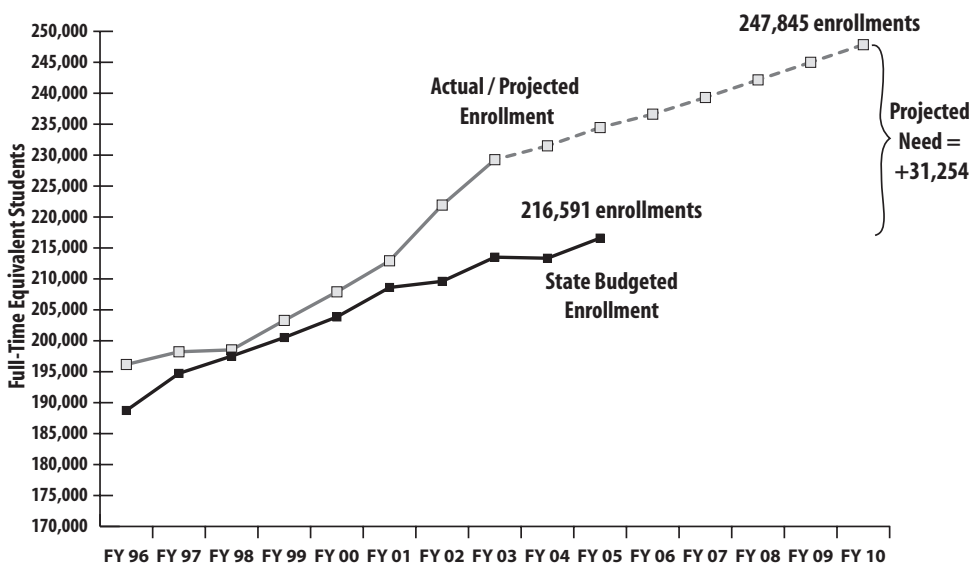
**Children's Programs** - Premiums for the health care of children in low income families were reduced. Funding was increased for foster care and kinship caregivers. The school lunch program is expanded and eligibility for food stamps is increased to help reduce hunger in Washington's children.

**Of Special Note** - A budget document is lengthy, complicated and full of details. Every paragraph and every dollar amount is important to some group or groups of our residents. The state rarely funds specific research at the University of Washington or Washington State University, but a few examples illustrate the range of interests and requests.

Representatives of the UW asked for seed money for proteomics research — analyzing the protein structures of the human body. Proteins drive all functions — from the involuntary blink of the eye to the coagulation of blood on a cut finger, plus disease, immunity and much more. We provided \$ 1.6 million, which is expected to trigger grants from federal and private sources — making Washington the lead in this research.

Funding was provided to WSU to seek solutions to the "burrowing shrimp", a creature which causes the collapse of mud and silt in tidal grasslands and negatively impacts valuable oyster beds.

**By 2010, more than 31,000 additional state-funded enrollment slots will be needed to allow the same proportion of the state's population to enroll at public higher education institutions.**





# State Representative **Helen Sommers**

## Other Interesting Legislation

### **YEAR OF THE FOSSIL**

The Governor issued a Proclamation naming "2004 The Year of the Fossil." The Burke Museum, our state's natural history museum on the UW campus, has kicked off a year long celebration recognizing a wealth of fossils – dinosaurs, fossil whales on the Olympic Peninsula, plant fossils from Republic, 50- million year old cedar, blackberry, apple leaves, and much more.

The *Dinosaurs of Darkness* exhibit is the story of strange dinosaurs who lived near the North and South Poles and runs until October 3rd. *The Burgess Shale: Evolution's Big Bang* starts in November. This British Columbia fossil site shows life forms over 500 million years old – a rare look at this ancient world.

Visit the Burke and see these great exhibits.



### **CYBERSTALKING**

In response to a terrible problem faced by a woman in our 36th District, I prime-sponsored a bill to make stalking by electronic communication a crime, allowing prosecutors to bring charges against the perpetrator. Cyberstalking covers the most vicious examples of harassment by email and by telephone. Predators often use technology — hiding their identity — to terrorize their victims. Testimony on this bill showed some especially ugly cases that included years of verbal attacks and slander against women – including messages aimed at them, their spouses, family members, co-workers and supervisors. This bill passed both the House and Senate by unanimous vote and has been signed by Governor Locke.



## 2004 REPORT TO THE 36TH DISTRICT

Where: 5429 32nd Ave. NW  
Seattle

When: **May 15, 2004**  
**10 a.m. – Noon**

Please join me, along with Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson and Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles, to discuss the 2004 Legislative Session.

### **Town Meeting**

Representative  
**Helen Sommers**  
204 John L. O'Brien Bldg.  
PO BOX 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600



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